

# Holy Week and Pascha at Home

## Resource Guide



Compiled by Presvytera Jennifer Moore

Christ is in our Midst! He is and always shall be!

He is in our midst in plague and health, in poor and plenty, in our church and in our homes. And there He shall be during Holy Week, whether we participate in our church building or in our homes.

But you know that already. You know that because our hierarchs, our clergy, our lay leaders, and our brothers and sisters in Christ are encouraging each other with the words. We know we ARE the Church, and we ought to be encouraged and consoled by that. However, should we not be able to be together to worship during Holy Week, we should also know that it is okay to experience that loss. It is okay to grieve the rhythm and normalcy of worshipping together in our parish communities. It is a beautiful thing to yearn to be with Christ in His temple with our church family.

The unfortunate truth is, of course, that it will not be so this year. Holy Week is difficult. As Orthodox Christians we spend about a 40-hour week at services if we attend every service. This is hard enough with the sights, the smells, the sounds immediately before us, but it will be harder when we are in the comfort of our own homes. So how is it that we can keep ourselves and our children attentive to live-streamed services during the pinnacle of our Church year? How can we continue to celebrate the week in our homes? I'd like to share some ideas with you.

#### For the Whole Week-

- [Follow along with all the services and readings at AGES Digital Chant Stand](#)
- [Watch and learn all about the icons for Holy Week](#)

#### Lazarus Saturday – Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup>

- Before Lazarus Saturday learn the Apolytikion of the Day and sing along during liturgy. You

*To confirm the general resurrection before Your, Passion, You resurrected Lazarus from the dead, O Christ our God. Therefore imitating the children carrying the symbols of victory, we cry out to You the Victor over death: "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed are You, the One, comes in the name of the Lord.*

[A video \(in a different translation\) by Presvytera Sophia Zaferes](#)

- If you have one, put your icon in a place of honor that you are able to see during the liturgy. If not, you can print one! If you print it, laminate it and save for next year to place in your icon corner for the feast day.

Decorate! Adorn with flowers, leaves, vines, tissue paper/fabric flowers. Whatever you find beautiful will be a beautiful offering to God.

- [This lovely, short podcast episode for younger children explores the whys of Lazarus Saturday, with a timely discussion on how Christ feels about death.](#)

- [Engage children with this packet from Orthodox Pebbles containing a craft idea, an explanation of the icon, discussion points, and even more resources.](#)
- [Make Lazarakia/Lazarus Bread](#)
- Go on a walk or hike to find “the symbols of victory” to hold during the Palm Sunday liturgy.

Lazarus Saturday is the day we typically fold palm crosses in the Greek Orthodox tradition, Slavic traditions use pussy willows, and some Arabic traditions decorate candles with flowers. These are special and beautiful traditions that have adapted due to cultural climates and fauna. Today, go on a walk and find a suitable symbol. It could be a fern leaf, pussy willows, wildflowers, tree branch, etc.

#### Palm Sunday/Bridegroom Matins- Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup>

- Bring out or print an icon of the feast day! Decorate with yesterdays adornments!
- Wear bright, festive colors! It is a triumphant day!
- The Apolytikion for today is the same as yesterday's. Sing along!
- Wave your symbols of faith that you collected yesterday whenever you hear “Hosanna in the Highest!” or “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”
- [A video to understand the feast of Palm Sunday \(and Lazarus Saturday!\) better.](#) \*Fine for children, but best for older children/teens/adults
- Bring out or print a Bridegroom icon.
- In the afternoon, begin learning the special hymns for the Bridegroom Matins services. Begin with the Troparion:

*Behold, the Bridegroom is coming in the middle of the night; and blessed is the servant He shall find awake and watching; unworthy is the other He shall find being lazy. So beware, O soul of mine, be not overcome by sleep, so that you not be handed over to death and be cut out from the Kingdom. Come to your senses and cry aloud: Holy, holy, holy are You our God.*

#### [A video \(slightly different translation\) by Fr. Apostolos Hill:](#)

- In the evening, participate in the Bridegroom Service via livestream. Sing the troparion three times together!
- Watch for the priest to process the Bridegroom icon. Allow your young children to process your icon! Leave it in a place of honor for tomorrow's service.

### Holy Monday- Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>

- Today learn about the Parable of the Ten Virgins where we get the imagery of Christ as Bridegroom.

[A short audio book for kids](#)

[A longer podcast for adults](#)

[A short reading](#)

- Learn the hymn, “O my Savior”

*O my Savior, now I see Your wedding hall decorated, an I have not the garment needed for me to enter it. Make this raiment of my soul brightly shine, O Giver-of-Light, and save me.*

[Another video \(again, different translation\) by Father Apostolos Hill](#)

- In the evening, participate in the Bridegroom Service via livestream. Sing the troparion and this new hymn three times each!

### Holy Tuesday- Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>

- Today the Bridegroom service focuses on the woman, Kassiani, who anointed Christ’s feet with oil. She was a sinful woman but acknowledged her sinfulness and poured out expensive oil to anoint the master.

Spend some time today cleaning your icons and especially the icon of Christ. If you have it, use rosewater water to sweeten the smell. Be careful with your hand-painted icons!

- Continue practicing your hymns today, and sing along as you participate in the live-stream service.
- Listen carefully to hear the Hymn of Kassiani and follow along!

*The woman who had fallen into many sins recognizes Thy Godhead, O Lord. She takes upon herself the duty of a myrrh-bearer and makes ready the myrrh of mourning, before Thy entombment. Woe to me! saith she, for my night is an ecstasy of excess, gloomy and moonless, and full of sinful desire. Receive the sources of my tears, O Thou Who dost gather into clouds the water of the sea; in Thine ineffable condescension, deign to bend down Thyself to me and to the lamentations of my heart, O Thou Who didst spread out the Heavens. I will fervently embrace Thy sacred feet, and wipe them again with the tresses of the hair of my head, Thy feet at whose sound Eve hid herself for fear when she heard Thee walking in Paradise in the cool of the day. O my Saviour and soul-Saver who can trace out the multitude of my sins, and the abysses of Thy judgement? Do not disregard me Thy servant, O Thou Whose mercy is boundless.*

- Today is a good day to start planning your Pascha basket if you're going to have one! We won't be able to bring our baskets to church this year for a blessing, but it's a wonderful thing to look forward to. Your basket can be traditional or simply full of the things you've missed during the fast. If you've never done one, this is a great year to start.

[Here is a helpful graphic and article on how to put a traditional basket together.](#)

#### Holy Wednesday- Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>

- Today is the traditional day for Holy Unction. Holy Unction is not specifically a Holy Week service! Perhaps your priest will have the service at a later date when everyone can be together.
- If you have holy oil or even holy water, anoint each other, making the sign of the cross on each person's forehead.
- Tonight is the final Bridegroom service! Sing the hymns you have learned during the service.
- We have somberly eased into the week with these beautiful Bridegroom Matins and beginning tomorrow, Holy Thursday, services begin to increase and things get harder. Rest today, pray, and prepare to focus on the services to come.

#### Holy Thursday- Thursday, April 16<sup>th</sup>

- Bring out or print an icon of the Last Supper. Holy Thursday begins with a vesperal liturgy which celebrates the institution of the Eucharist. Participate in the liturgy and note the differences from Sunday morning liturgies!
- To celebrate the institution of the Eucharist, make prosphora as a family. [Here is a video Fr. Matthew Moore made about making prosphora.](#)
- Holy Thursday is a perfect day to dye eggs and make your preparations for Pascha!

[To try traditional onion skin dyeing technique](#)

For red egg dye you can find it on Amazon or your local Greek store (if they are open!)  
[I like the dye from Legacy Icons](#)

If egg dyeing is not your thing, egg wraps make beautiful eggs. You can find them on Amazon or [Legacy Icons](#)

- Learn about the Miracle of the Red egg!  
If you want to invest in a book, [The Miracle of the Red Egg by Elizabeth Crispina Johnson](#)  
[A free reading of the same book](#)  
[A short article](#)
- It's a great day to make tsoureki, too!  
[A recipe if you do not have one.](#)
- Thursday Night Matins is quite a long service and includes the Twelve Gospel readings. Be especially patient with your children and easy on yourself here! There is a lot to see in the service, but a video of the service will not have the same sensory input.
- Watch the candles be lit after each Gospel reading! Light your own candles along. For little ones, use LED candles. You'll need twelve!  
[Here's one example.](#)
- After the Fifth Gospel Reading, kneel while the priest processes the icon of Christ and sing:

*Today, He who suspended the earth in the waters is suspended on a cross. (3) The King of the Angels wears a crown of thorns. He who wraps the sky in clouds is wrapped in a fake purple robe. He who freed Adam in the Jordan accepts to be slapped. The Bridegroom of the Church is fixed with nails to the cross. The Son of the Virgin is pierced with a spear. We worship Your Passion, O Christ. We worship Your Passion, O Christ. We worship Your Passion, O Christ. Show us also Your Glorious Resurrection.*

#### Holy Friday- Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup>

- Icon! You know what to do! Today's appropriate icon would be the crucifixion or the Extreme Humility icon.
- Today is traditionally a day of fasting and self-reflection. We hear the very last moments of Christ's life. Many people will fast from technology (recreational), television, etc. Have some time of solitude. It is easy to do that during this time of sheltering-in-place, but be intentional and prayerful today.
- The first service of the day is the Royal Hours of Great and Holy Friday. This is a very simple service with many psalms.
- We traditionally decorate the kouvouklion, or the tomb of Christ together today. We decorate his tomb for the same reason we leave flowers at the grave of those we love. If possible and safe, visit the cemetery and pray for them and hope in the Lord. Bring flowers if you can, but your prayers are the most beautiful gift.
- For little ones, consider making a kouvouklion. Here is an example! [Here is an example!](#)

- The second service of the day is the Unnailing of Christ. We take Christ down from the Cross and wrap him in a clean, white sheet. This year may look different and we may not have a large icon to take down from the Cross.
- Listen to the beautiful hymn while Father removes the icon.

*Joseph took You down from the Cross after You had died, and prepared You, O Christ, for burial. Using myrrh, he wrapped you in a shroud, O Life of all. And constrained by his ardent love, he longed to embrace YOU, pressing to Your spotless body his own heart and lips. But restrained by fear and by rev'rence, joyously he cried to You, 'Glory to Your condescension, Lord who love mankind.'*

When Father wraps the icon in the sheet, also use a white cloth to wrap your icon of Christ. Place Him in the tomb you made if you can. Otherwise, place Him in your icon corner.

- The final service today is the Lamentations Service. The women come to the tomb bearing spices. Listen to the hymns tonight and hear how they have changed from the afternoon to evening. This afternoon we were mourning with a grave sound, and tonight we are already hoping in the resurrection. The tones are bright!
- There may be no kouvouklion to process this year, but process your around your home if you made one! These beautiful traditions are holy because of our hearts and our efforts. Whether it is a custom made wooden bier or a homemade kouvouklion, the Lord knows that we are worshipping Him in our capacity.

#### Holy Saturday- Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>

- The icon for today is the Harrowing of Hades. Those who have cared for children especially will note the way Christ is grabbing the wrists of Adam and Eve! They can neither pull away nor be snatched from His hands!  
[Take a look at it! Here is an explanation of the icon.](#)
- We start the day with Divine Liturgy, which is the first resurrection service. This service commemorates Christ's descent into Hades and breaking the bonds of the captives.
- When the priest sings  
*"Arise, O God; judge the earth, for You shall inherit all the Gentiles!"* [make a joyful noise!](#) This is the sound of the locks and chains falling from our forefathers and mothers! Ring bells! Stomp on the floor! This is not just for children. The Harrowing of Hades is serious business!

- For the rest of the day prepare for Pascha! Make your Pascha basket if you plan to. Finish your baking and cooking while remembering the joy of the morning. Make/decorate/find a candle for tonight's resurrection service! For little ones, the LED candles used on Holy Thursday are perfect. Death has already been defeated, but the Earth awaits the Good News!
- Practice singing "Christ is Risen/Christos Anesti"

"Christ is Risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death, and to those in the tombs granting life!"

"Christos Anesti ek nekron, thanato thanaton patisas, kai tis en tis mnimasi zoin harisamenos."

- Evening Liturgy! Here it is! Dear ones, receive the light. It is not in a candle's flame, it is the light of the Good News, the joy of the resurrection. Mark and seal your houses with hope and joy in the Lord. Come, receive the light.
- As you participate in the liturgy, sing Christ is Risen together! Sing it in all the languages you know.
- Listen to the Paschal homily of St. John Chrysostom. At this particular time, we feel the sting of death while we grieve and battle together with the world. But the sting of death is temporary because Christ has Risen! Hope has been restored! [Read it here](#).
- Enjoy a Paschal meal together. As St. John Chrysostom says in the paschal sermon Father read, whether you came at the first hour or the final hour, feast! Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

#### Pascha- Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup>

- Practice greeting each other with "Christ is Risen!" and replying "Truly He is Risen!"
- Call your loved ones, FaceTime, or Zoom chat with them and greet them. Sing Christ is Risen together!
- Decorate your home with any Pascha Decorations  
[Free Printable Picture](#)  
[Free Printable Banner](#)
- [For children, listen to some beautiful Pascha books!](#)

- Today's service is [Agape Vespers](#). There may not be many people to read in different languages. Do a group chat to read the gospel in as many languages as possible. The reading is from John 20:19-25:

<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (also known as Didymus<sup>[a]</sup>), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

## Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

Whether it felt right or didn't, whether it feels like Pascha or it doesn't, Christ is Risen!